

Message Text

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67

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SUBJ: TORRIJOS ON CANAL NEGOTIATIONS

SUMMARY: GENERAL TORRIJOS, IN MAY 8 SPEECH AT COSTA RICAN UNIVERSITY, HAS EXPOUNDED ON CANAL ISSUE AND TRJATY NEGOTIATIONS. TORRIJOS EMPHASIZED THAT NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDERWAY AND CONSTITUTE PANAMA'S PREFERRED MEANS OF CONSOLIDATING ITS SOVEREIGNTY; STRESSED THAT CANAL ISSUE IS RECEIVING HIGH-LEVEL U.S. ATTENTION BECAUSE GOP HAS MADE ITS SOLUTION A PRIORITY PROBLEM; REMINDED THAT LIBERATION WAS SECOND SOLUTION; COMMITTED PANAMA TO MAINTAINING CANAL ALWAYS OPEN; AND REAFFIRMED OBJECTIONS TO U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS, IN COSTA RICA FOR THIRD TIME WITHIN A MONTH, ADDRESSED STUDENTS AT ANTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF HEEREDIA MAY 8. HIS REMARKS DIRECTED TO THE CANAL ISSUE RECEIVED HEADLINE COVERAGE AND ARE SUMMARIZED BELOW AS REPORTED IN MAY 9 LOCAL PRESS.

2. STRESSING THAT PANAMA'S OBJECTIVE WAS TO CONSOLIDATE ITS SOVEREIGNTY -- FIRST THROUGH NEGOTIATION -- TORRIJOS OBSERVED THAT DECOLONIZATION CAN BE ACHIEVED BY DIFFERENT MEANS. WERE IT NOT FOR A SECOND WAY -- LIBERATION --
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PANAMA WOULD NOT BE EPEAKING WITH THE ASSURANCE THAT IN

AN "IMMEDIATE FUTURE, A NEAR FUTURE" IT WOULD BE CONSOLIDATED. NOTING THAT PANAMA HAS DECIDED TO MAKE ITS CAUSE A NATIONAL "RELIGION., ONE THAT HAS BECOME A RELIGION OF LATIN AMERICA, TORRIJOS WARNED THAT "RELIGIONS CAN BRING RELIGIOUS WARS." CITING VIETNAM AS MOST RECENT EXAMPLE, THE GENERAL STATED THAT IT HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED THAT WHEN A PEOPLE "DECIDE TO BE DECONONIZED THEY DECOLONIZE, OVER THE SHORT, LONG OR INTERMEDIATE RUN BUT THEY DECOLONIZE."

3. RETURNING TO THE NEGOTIATION, TORRIJOS STATED THAT "WE ARE NEGOTIATING; EFFECTIVELY, WE ARE NEGOTIATING." REVIEWING PANAMA'S SUCCESS AT 1973 UN SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING, TORRIJOS STATED PANAMA HAD IMPRESSED OUNCIL MEMBERS THAT THE ZONE IS A "LARGE ENCAMPMENT SUPPORTED BY 14 BASES THAT SERVES AS A MONUMENT OF SHAME FOR THOSE WHO SUSTAIN IT." DEVELOPING THEME OF PANAMA'S SUCCESS IN RAISING THE CANAL ISSUE TO MAJOR PROBLEM STATUS, TORRIJOS USED ANALOGY OF THE SICK CHILD RECEIVING THE MOST ATTENTION. ADMITTING THAT EVERYONE RESPONDS TO PRESSURE, GOVERNMENTS AS WELL AS PARENTS, TORRIJOS ASSERTED THAT TO THE EXTENT PANAMA MADE ITSELF A PROBLEM IT RECEIVED RECOGNITION THAT AT LEAST THERE WAS A PROBLEM. "IN ORDER FOR A PROBLEM TO BE RESOLVED, IT MUST FIRST BECOME A PROBLEM. IF THERE IS NO PROBLEM, THERE IS NO SOLUTION." IN TRUTH, HE SAID, PANAMA "HAD PAID TOO HIGH A SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND DIGNITY COST" WHEN IT LENT ITS POSITION FOR THE CANAL.

4. MOVING ON, TORRIJOS EMPHASIZED THAT PANAMA HAS GIVEN THE WORLD "INCALCUABLE BENEFITS" AND, POSSESSED OF A VOCATION OF SERVICE, KNOWS THAT IT "MUST CONTINUE TO GIVE THEM." REAFFIRMING THAT NO PANAMANIAN HAD EVER DAMAGED THE CANAL, KNOWING THAT TO DO SO WOULD HARM THEMSELVES, THE GENERAL ASSERTED THAT THE CANAL'S MISSION WAS TO ALWAYS REMAIN OPEN. "WE ARE CONSCIOUS THAT UNDER WHATEVER REGIME THE CANAL IS OPERATED, ITS FIRST MISSION IS TO REMAIN OPEN 24-HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK FOR ALL THE FLAGS OF THE WORLD. HUMANITY CANNOT BE PUNISHED FOR THE INTRANSIGENCE OF SOMEONE THAT ATTEMPTS TO CLOSE CANAL

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TRAFFIC." TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE, TORRIJOS REMARKED THAT WHAT PANAMA WAS FIGHTING FOR IS THAT "THIS WORK, WHICH WAS MADE FOR THE BENEFIT OF HUMANITY, DOES NOT CONTINUE TO BE A STRATEGIC COMMAND FOR REPRISALS. PANAMA HAS NO VOCATION FOR LENDING ITS LANDS IN ORDER THAT THERE ARE ESTABLISHED ON THEM REPRISALS AGAINST ANYONE."

5. OBSERVING THAT PANAMANIAN ARE "VERY SKEPTICAL"

OF A COUNTRY THAT "HAS DECEIVED THEM FOR 70 YEARS,"
TORRIJOS STATED THAT "NEVERTHELESS" THE CANAL PROBLEM
HAS BEEN GIVEN IMPORTANCE BY THE U.S. AND "WE ARE
NEGOTIATING AT A HIGH DECISION LEVEL." NOTING THAT HE IS
ALWAYS ASKED "HOW LONG?", TORRIJOS CONCLUDED HIS
REMARKS BY ASSERTING THAT "THERE IS NO COLONIAL SITUATION
THAT LASTS 100 YEARS OR PANAMANIAN THAT WILL ENDURE IT."
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